

GET READY FOR POLE-BENDING ACTION

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Spring Fishing Forecast 2008 How and Where to Hook 'em

CRAPPIES

HOW TO: Fish crappies during spawn from late April through early June. Fish southern and small, shallow lakes in April and May; northern lakes and large, deep lakes mid-May to early June. Use a small jig with or without a minnow. Spawning crappies are accessible to shore anglers.

Big Creek will be hot this spring with lots of 9- to 10-inch fish. *Roberts Creek* and nearby *Lake Red Rock* are home to 14- and 16-inch fish, respectively. In spring, fish around rock or trees near shore. Find fish in warm, shallow upper bays. *Prairie Rose Lake* has gobs of 8-inch crappies. "Everybody can catch fish at *Prairie Rose* in the spring," said Chris Larson, southwest Iowa fisheries supervisor. Use red and white tube jigs on a 1/64-ounce or 1/32-ounce leadhead along rocks. *Lake Icaria*, *Three Fires*, *Binder* and *Old Corning*

Reservoir in Adams and Taylor counties, all renovated in 2004, have loads of 9- to 11-inch crappies. *Wilson* and *Windmill lakes* in Taylor County had excellent crappie fishing in 2007 and will repeat this year.

Lake Rathbun does not have huge numbers but does have 11- to 14-inch crappies. "The first part of June can just be electric," said Steve Waters, southeast Iowa fisheries supervisor. Use minnows, jig and minnows or just jigs. Fish coves in *Honey Creek*, *Buck Creek*, *Ham Creek* and above the bridge, out of wind and wave action. If fish are finicky, use a smaller jig.

Diamond Lake has loads of 8- to 10-1/2-inch crappies. Fish shallow brush and jetties with small jigs. With good water quality, the lake should remain clear after spring rains.

On the *Mississippi River*, fish below lock and dams in



spillways and backwaters. *Black Hawk Lake* has a huge population of 8- to 14-inch crappies. *Fish Towne Bay* with a minnow or larvae and bobber.

Smith Lake will have crappies concentrated around shoreline structure and boulders along the dam. Use a 1/32 ounce jig with or without a minnow. Keep the bait above the crappies because they will come up to hit it. *Lake Pahoja* in Lyon County is also loaded with crappies.

BLUEGILLS

HOW TO: Bluegills spawn in shallow water with gravel, sand or mud from late May to mid-June. The shallow bowl-like nests are aggressively protected by male bluegills. Fish nest areas to catch a lot of fish quickly. Use a long fishing rod, 4-pound line and a 1/32-ounce to a 1/80-ounce jig, plain hook

or ice fishing jig under a small bobber and tip with 1-inch of a night crawler or insect larvae.

Lake Ahquabi has 10-inch bluegills. *Big Creek Lake* has excellent numbers up to 9 inches. *Mormon Trail* and *Nodaway* offer good fishing for 8 to 9-inch fish. *Lake Icaria*, *Three Fires* and *Lake Anita* boast excellent populations of 8-inch plus fish, as do *Green Valley* and *Three Mile*. *Twelve Mile* is full and the lake has good numbers of 'gills up to 8 inches. Larger bluegills are available at *Greenfield* and *Grade Lakes* and *Walnut Creek Marsh* in the Mt. Ayr wildlife area.

Lake Sugema has been a bluegill factory for years. As the lake has matured, bluegill size has improved. During spawn, use an ice fishing fly with small bobbers.

Lake Belva Deer has excellent water quality, habitat and many 7- to 10-inch bluegills. *Lake Geode* and *Swan Lake* are

loaded with 7 to 9-inch bluegills. Fish the lower end of *Geode* along the high banks pre-spawn or post-spawn. An ice jig tipped with a wax worm works well. Swan Lake is kid-friendly with excellent shoreline access.

The *Mississippi River* has excellent bluegill fishing. In Pool 9, fish *Black Hawk Bottoms*; in Pool 10, fish *Bagleys and Jays Lake*; in Pool 11, fish *Sunfish and Bertom lakes*.

Bluegill fishing will be excellent at *Briggs Woods*. Fish over sand or gravel bottoms with a 1/32 ounce or 1/64 ounce black jig tipped with a wax worm, wiggler or other insect larvae. *Hannan Lake* is good, too.

West Okoboji Lake and Spirit Lake are excellent for bluegill. After ice out, fish in Anglers Bay or at the *North Grade at Spirit*, then move to the weeds or rock piles as the weather warms. At West Okoboji, fish the canals early in May, then move to *Little Millers and Little Emerson bays* in June.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

Big Creek, Rock Creek, Don Williams and Saylorville all boast largemouth bass weighing over 5 pounds. *Lake Anita* is loaded with 15- to 20-inch bass and lots of structure to fish. *Ahquabi, Three Fires, Icaria and Twelve Mile* will all be good. *Green Valley, Three Mile, West Lake Osceola and Badger Creek* have mature populations of larger bass.

March is when lunkers are caught as fish are feeding after ice-out and larger females are aggressively feeding to prepare to spawn. For cold water, use slower moving crankbaits and a slow retrieve. As water warms, fish top-water baits in the morning and evening and spinner baits during the day. Bass will be active near shore during May and early June either feeding or spawning and shore fishing will be good.

Lake Miami is the best bass fishery in southeast Iowa, with 16- to 20-inch fish common. Spring fishing is best. The lake is full and the fishery has improved since the DNR lowered the water level a few years ago. The addition of retention ponds around the lake has improved water quality. Use whatever bass lures you are comfortable with—spinner baits, crankbaits in warmer water, jig-n-pig or rubber worms.

Lake Macbride has the hard-fighting Kentucky spotted bass in addition to the largemouth. Rocky habitat favors the Kentucky, while the rest of the lake favors the largemouth. Fish points, woody and rock structure. Kentucky bass are smaller than largemouth, but put up an excellent fight.

Lake Wapello has a huge population of 11- to 14-inch bass, with lunkers, too. Use traditional bass lures and fish reefs, pallets and rock structure. Newer silt structures have improved water quality. *Lake Hendricks* in Howard County has nice sized fish.

In *Mississippi River Pool 10*, several years of good vegetation at *Bussey Lake* created a good bass and bluegill fishery. In *Pool 11*, fish the deepened shoreline at the boat ramp in *Mud Lake*.

Brushy Creek has 7 pound bass, excellent habitat and good water quality. Cast spinners and plastics around trees.

West Okoboji Lake has excellent fishing in the canals early in the year because the water warms more quickly. Use worms, spinners and shallow running crankbaits.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

The Wapsipinicon River in Buchanan and Black Hawk counties and the Maquoketa from Delaware to Jones counties have good smallmouth bass populations and good shore fishing access. The “Turkey Foot” area of the *Cedar, Shell Rock and the West Fork of the Cedar* has excellent fishing. Use inline spinners for clear water and leeches or minnows for cloudy water. Smallmouth will bite all day long.

The *Mississippi River* has good fishing in current around rocky points, riprap and rocky areas in side channels. Throw crankbaits or spinners. In the *Turkey River*, the best fishing is from late spring to early summer using small jigs.

The *North Raccoon River from Sac City downstream* has excellent smallmouth up to 3 pounds. Target deep holes with crankbaits. The *Iowa River* is excellent for smallmouth from June to August using Mepps spinners, twisters or a crawdad-colored crankbait in slack water or eddies.

Spirit Lake has great smallmouth populations. Fish after ice out. Use a jig and minnow over shallow rock piles on sunny, calm days. As the water warms, fish deep rock piles and switch to live bait rigs with leeches or diving crankbaits.

WALLEYE

HOW TO: In early spring, fish rocks, rocky shorelines or the face of dams. Spring fishing is mostly on a jig or a jig and minnow. After the spawn, add night crawlers and crankbaits. In June, walleyes are often found in 6 to 10 feet of water. June is second only to the spawn as the best time for walleyes.

The *Des Moines and Raccoon rivers* in the spring produce walleyes up to 10 pounds mostly below low-head dams and near gravel bars. In late March and early April, fish move upstream and gather below dams. Use live bait on heavy ¼-ounce to ¾-ounce jigs against the current.

Lake Icaria is going like gang-busters with excellent fishing for walleyes up to 18 inches. *Twelve Mile* has a growing population of walleyes up to 16 inches and *Three Mile and Little River* each have good numbers of larger fish. *Lake Manawa* has good numbers of large fish and a lot of younger fish. Fish the south shore for large walleyes.

Rathbun is an outstanding late spring walleye fishery, loaded with 13- to 15-inch fish and a good number of lunkers. Troll crankbaits around humps and points to produce fish all day. Using night crawlers on a Lindy rig is good, too.

Walleye and sauger fishing below lock and dams 15 through 19 on the *Mississippi River* begins in late winter using jigging spoons and vertical jigs tipped with minnow heads, or a floating jig tipped with a minnow or worm.

The *upper Mississippi River* has two excellent year classes offering good numbers of 15- to 20-inch walleyes. Fish dams one to two miles downstream all spring. After spawn, fish wing dams and rocks. *Ackerman's Cut and nearby Cassville Slough in Pool 11* is good, target drop-offs in 10 to 25 feet of water. Use a ½ to ¾-ounce vertical jig tipped with a minnow. As the water warms, use a three-way rig with a night crawler.

Lake Sugema is a spring walleye fishery. Look for rocky areas. Use a Lindy rig, throw crankbaits off wing dams or





cast a jig and minnow with a slow retrieve.

In the *Cedar River, in Mitchell and Floyd counties*, the best fishing is from March until the spring water level rises. Below Nashua are good numbers of 20-inch plus fish. *The Turkey River* is good in deeper holes from El Dorado to Elgin. Use 1/8- to 1/4-ounce jigs, depending upon conditions. Also fish the *West Fork of the Cedar River in Black Hawk, Bremer and Butler counties*, and the *Maquoketa River from Delaware to Jones County*.

Storm Lake will have phenomenal fishing trolling crankbaits or casting jigs in the dredge cut and north shore in May and June. Fishing was hot all summer and fall in 2007. *Spirit Lake* had an excellent walleye harvest and will again in 2008. Fish rocky shorelines and points in May and June. Storm and Spirit have protected slots—any walleye between 17 and 22 inches must be immediately released alive.

Walleye fishing at Clear Lake heats up from mid May into June. Drift fish with leeches, night crawlers or minnows in 8 to 14 feet of water, or troll Shad Raps or Wally Divers.

Silver Lake is a consistent producer for 13 to 18-inch walleyes, and larger. April and May is good for wader anglers fishing rocky shores and points with twisters or minnow type crankbaits. Boat anglers can troll the same areas.

CHANNEL CATFISH

HOW TO: After ice out, channel catfish gorge on winter-killed fish. Dead fish are blown to shore, trailed by hungry catfish. Use dead fish—shad, bluegill or chubs—and fish in 5 feet of water or less in bays where wind blows in, for some of the hottest angling of the year.

Iowa waters are loaded with channel catfish and any public lake offers good catfishing.

Saylorville Lake has channel cats up to 20 pounds. *Prairie Rose, Lake Manawa and Greenfield* have excellent numbers of big fish. *Green Valley, Three Mile and Little River* all have good fishing.

There are good numbers of 15- to 20-inch, eater-sized fish in *Lake Anita, Lake Icaria, Lake of Three Fires, Binder Reservoir, Twelve Mile Lake, Afton Reservoir, Nine Eagles, Greenfield Lake, Mormon Trail and Lake Nodaway*.

Iowa's rivers are catfish factories and often overlooked. But, anglers may need a little more experience to find fish. *The Des Moines, Racoon, Cedar and Skunk rivers* have excellent numbers. The Mississippi River will have the best channel cat fishing in Iowa. With great cat numbers up and down river, the best fishing will be in pools 18 and 19. The *East and West Forks of the Des Moines River* have all sizes of catfish. Fish snags, outside bends below riffles and in deep water with stink baits, chubs and frogs.

Rathbun and Coralville are legendary catfish lakes with outstanding fishing.

Storm Lake has an excellent population of 2- to 5-pound catfish and fishing is good right after ice out. *Five Island Lake* has excellent channel catfish fishing too.

FLATHEAD CATFISH

The Racoon, Des Moines, Cedar and Skunk rivers have

good flathead numbers. *The Missouri River*, especially the southern stretch, will be good, including trophy sized fish. *The Mississippi River* has good flathead fishing, especially from May to June, in the lock and dam tailwaters. Patience is the key as well as using live bait, like green sunfish, chubs or bullheads, or a big ball of night crawlers and fish below riffle areas or in pools with big brush piles.

BULLHEADS

North Twin, Rice and Silver lakes in Palo Alto County have good bullheads. Fish at North Twin reach 14 inches. Use a slip sinker and night crawler on the lake bottom. Fish right after ice out until May on windy shores.

WHITE BASS AND WIPERS

Saylorville and Red Rock have excellent numbers of 16 to 17-inch fish, willing to hit any shad-like spoon. Watch for shad busting the water surface—chances are white bass or wipers are in pursuit. If shad are not jumping, look for humps or structure rising above water as places to hold fish.

The Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15 will have a banner year for catching 11- to 12-inch white bass. Use any type of minnow-imitating lure in the lock and dam tailwaters.

Lake Macbride has many 19-inch wipers and a similar white bass fishery. If shad are not breaking the surface, troll open water with a flashy, shallow running lure, like a Mepps spinner, Kastmaster or crankbait. *Coralville and Lake Rathbun* also have nice white bass populations. Fish humps and points, and use a shallow running lure. If fish drop below the surface, use a diving lure.

Storm Lake has 8- to 17-inch white bass, many caught while fishing for walleyes. Cast from jetties or rocky shorelines. East Okoboji has 12- to 18-inch white bass and fishing is best when the spillway is flowing in from *Spirit Lake*. Fish right where it empties into East. Use crankbaits around 2 inches long, or a jig and minnow.

TROUT

Bloody Run has good stream access and supports wild brown trout in the lower end. Recent habitat work holds high densities of wild fish and provides a good return on fingerlings in the county park area. The stream is stocked as well. There are special regulations above the county park on the upper end.

The North and South Bear, French Creek and Waterloo Creek has excellent wild brown trout populations. The streams are in the same vicinity and can be fished in a weekend.

Turtle Creek in Mitchell County has good access and about one mile of stream in county ownership. It is stocked with catchable sized fish with new bank hides added last year.

Richmond Springs in Backbone State Park has excellent access. *Spring Branch at the Manchester Hatchery* has dense numbers of spring-reared browns. Spring Branch has an artificial lure only rule and a 14-inch minimum length limit.

If using a spin casting reel, try a micro jig or small crankbait. If fly fishing, try an elk hair caddis fly, or a bead

head nymph. The best fly fishing is June when insects are emerging and stream levels gently rise. **TIP:** "The best time to catch wild browns is right at sunset because they are much more wary than the hatchery raised fish," says fishery staff.

MUSKIES

There are numerous 40-inch plus fish in *Three Mile Lake*. Fish along shorelines in spring. The clear water of *Pleasant Creek Lake* is a quality muskie fishery with 40-inch fish.

DRUM

Drum will provide excellent fishing on the *Mississippi River* from Pools 9 to 15, using a sliding sinker and night crawler in current. Shore fishing is as good as boat fishing.

FARM PONDS

Get permission, pick up after yourself, and remember to close

gates so others may be granted access. Ponds are excellent spots for bluegills, largemouth bass and, sometimes, crappies. Small ponds warm up quickly in the spring and offer good early fishing.

NORTHERN PIKE

In early spring, fish backwater vegetation near shore in the *Maquoketa River* and slack water in the *Winnebago River* in *Winnebago, Worth, Hancock and Cerro Gordo counties* with spoons, chubs or artificial lures.

Little Swan Lake in Dickinson County is loaded with 4 to 7 pound fish. Use chubs or spoons.

The announced stocking schedule begins in April and is available at www.iowadnr.gov or by calling 515-927-5736.



FISHING HOLE FINDER

- 1) BIG CREEK
- 2) ROBERTS CREEK
- 3) LAKE RED ROCK
- 4) PRAIRIE ROSE LAKE
- 5) LAKE ICARIA
- 6) LAKE OF THREE FIRES
- 7) BINDER RESERVOIR
- 8) OLD CORNING RESERVOIR
- 9) WILSON LAKE
- 10) WINDMILL LAKE
- 11) LAKE RATHBUN
- 12) DIAMOND LAKE
- 13) LAKE MEYER
- 14) BLACK HAWK LAKE
- 15) SMITH LAKE
- 16) LAKE PAHOJA
- 17) LAKE AQUABI
- 18) MORMON TRAIL
- 19) LAKE NODAWAY
- 20) LAKE ANITA

- 21) GREEN VALLEY LAKE
- 22) THREE MILE LAKE
- 23) TWELVE MILE LAKE
- 24) GREEN FIELD LAKE
- 25) GRADE LAKE
- 26) WALNUT CREEK MARSH
- 27) LAKE SUGEMA
- 28) LAKE BELVA DEER
- 29) LAKE GEODE
- 30) SWAN LAKE
- 31) BRIGGS WOODS
- 32) HANNAN LAKE
- 33) WEST OKOBOJI
- 34) SPIRIT LAKE
- 35) ROCK CREEK
- 36) DON WILLIAMS
- 37) SAYLORVILLE
- 38) WEST LAKE OSCEOLA
- 39) BADGER CREEK
- 40) LAKE MIAMI
- 41) LAKE MACBRIDE
- 42) LAKE WAPELLO
- 43) LAKE HENDRICKS

- 44) BRUSHY CREEK LAKE
- 45) BEEDS LAKE
- 46) LITTLE RIVER
- 47) LAKE MANAWA
- 48) STORM LAKE
- 49) CLEAR LAKE
- 50) SILVER LAKE
- 51) AFTON RESERVOIR
- 52) NINE EAGLES
- 53) CORALVILLE
- 54) NORTH TWIN
- 55) RICE LAKE
- 56) SILVER LAKE
- 57) SILVER LAKE
- 58) EAST OKOBOJI
- 59) LITTLE SWAN LAKE
- 60) PLEASANT CREEK

RIVERS

- A) WAPSI—BUCHANAN. & BLACK HAWK CO.
 B) MAQUOKETA—DELAWARE & JONES CO.
 C) TURKEY FOOT—WHERE CEDAR, SHELL ROCK AND W. FORK CEDAR MEET

- D) TURKEY RIVER
 E) N. RACCOON—SAC CO.
 F) IOWA RIVER—HARDIN CO.
 G) DES MOINES RIVER
 H) RACCOON RIVER
 I) CEDAR - FLOYD & TM
 J) WEST FORK CEDAR RIVER
 K) SKUNK
 L) E. & W. FORK DM
 M) MISSOURI RIVER
 N) WINNEBAGO RIVER

TROUT WATERS

- T1) BLOODY RUN
 T2) NORTH & SOUTH BEAR
 T3) FRENCH CREEK
 T4) WATERLOO CREEK
 T5) TURTLE CREEK
 T6) RICHMOND SPRINGS
 T7) SPRING BRANCH
 T8) BIG SPRINGS HATCHERY

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

- LOCK & DAM 9
 POOLS 9, 10, 11

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